

Marshal William Simpson | Village of New Miami



Age: 65
Served: 33 years
1913 To January 17, 1939

OFFICER

William was born May 17, 1874 in Princeton in Butler County to John and Henrietta Simpson. His father died when he was barely two years old and his mother when he was fourteen. We know nothing of him again until long after he was married.

He and his wife, Myrtle (Wysong) lived all their lives in and around Coke Otto (incorporated as the Village of New Miami in 1929) and married by the end of the 19th Century. Together, they had nine children.

He was also a long-time carpenter and bricklayer at the Coke plant in Coke Otto when he ran, possibly for the first time, for the Constable position in St. Claire Township in 1921 and won.

On March 1, 1923 Constable Simpson's youngest son, Howard (2), got hold of lye, ate a piece, and suffered terribly for months. He died on June 19, 1923 to the great sadness of his parents and siblings.

On November 19, 1923, Coke Otto Squire William Hanley was meeting with Constable Simpson in the Block House Café, when the squire and James Philpot of Manchester became embroiled in an argument which ended with Philpot shooting the Squire, and Constable Simpson shooting and killing Philpot. Simpson was charged with Manslaughter, a charge which would hang over him until February of the next year when he was exonerated.

On November 23, 1924 Constable Simpson's 22-year-old son, Louis Simpson was killed in an auto accident. So distraught was the driver that he shot and killed himself before being rescued from the wreckage.

On May 22, 1926 Constable Simpson's neck was cut while reading a search warrant at the home of Edward Thompson for the purpose of looking for liquor evidence. Thompson was found and arrested a week later by Sheriff Luther Epperson and charged with Cutting with Intent to Kill.

Coke Otto was due to be incorporated in 1929 as a village and named New Miami. On August 25, 1928 Constable Simpson filed to run for Marshal and was elected.

On November 3, 1931 Marshal Simpson ran for Mayor and was easily elected. However, on November 8, 1933 John Einsfeld was elected Mayor and for the first time in ten years, he was out of public office.

But, by January 9, 1938 Simpson was again Marshal and he had two Deputy Marshals, Andrew Cain and Jerry Sowell.

Marshal Simpson lost his wife Myrtle on July 10, 1938. He was still working as foreman at the steel plant.

MURDERERS

Hiram J. York was born September 17, 1920 in Kentucky to Minnie Stivers and an unknown man by the last name of York. At nine years old, on October 2, 1929 he was living in Hamilton and was accidentally shot in the hand when he and another youth, Bobby Kieser, were playing with a gun which we assume he did not have permission to possess. By 1930, he was living with Chester Farmer, whom his mother had married, a watchman in a lumber yard. During May 1931 he ran away from home. Just eleven-years-old, on July 1, 1932 York admitted to four burglaries of the Horn Kraus Lumber Company.

John R. Frazee was born in 1920 in Ohio. We know nothing of his life but believe that he and York were sent to Lancaster Reformatory for the same offense. There they met fellow Hamiltonian Arthur Meyers in 1935. Meyers was also born in 1920 in Ohio and we know nothing of his life. All three had been sent there for various theft offenses. They decided to form a gang.

By 1937, the gang had grown to twelve boys and an adult organized to steal property from cars. On January 6th, York was arrested. By the 17th, York, Myers, and Frazee were back at the Lancaster Reform School. They were not held long. During the summer of 1938, they stole a German Luger .30 caliber pistol from a service station in Richmond, Kentucky. Since then, each had taken turns carrying it. Soon, the insatiable thieves would graduate to murder.

Albert Helton was born during 1922 in Indiana, the fifth of

eight children born to Henry and Anna Helton of Kentucky. The family appears to have lived in Kentucky until just before his birth and soon after they moved to Hamilton. We do not know how or when Helton joined the gang.

INCIDENT

About 5 a.m. on the morning of January 13, 1939 Frazee, Meyers, York, and Helton broke into the Arthur Spradling's Café on Rt. 127.

The café was next to Spradling's home and the burglars were discovered by Marie Spradling, Art's mother. At 5 a.m., Art phoned Marshal Simpson. Marshal Simpson responded in a driving snowstorm at 5:30 a.m., though his right arm was in a cast from a recent fracture. He had first called Deputy Marshal Andrew Cain who arrived minutes later in his car within a block of the café, cut his engine, and coasted in. They met and decided on their approach. Marshal Simpson went to the front and Cain to the rear.

Marshal Simpson entered the front door. Frazee, carrying the Luger on this night, saw him, pulled a handgun, fired, and struck Marshal Simpson twice, including once in the chest. Marshal Simpson, though hit by two bullets, returned four shots before collapsing.

The burglars fled out the back door and Deputy Marshal Cain shot at them with a shotgun. He believed he hit one because when he fired, one fell, rolled ten feet, and got back up and ran. In fact, Meyers suffered a wound in the wrist. They disappeared in the vicinity of the Hamilton Coke and Iron Plant and were believed to have fled in a car.

Deputy Cain rushed to the front where he found Marshal Simpson wounded. Marshal Simpson said to him, "Well, they got me this time, buddy." He had bullet wounds to the upper chest and the other arm with the cast. Marshal Simpson was transported to Mercy Hospital in Hamilton where physicians found a bullet just above his heart.

York discarded the pistol on Eaton Road. The quartet drove around. They finally took Helton home and took Meyers to Covington where his arm was treated.

On Saturday, January 14, 1939, at 3:30 a.m., Spradling again saw a man trying to enter his café. Butler county officials rushed to the scene, but the man escaped.

DEATH

Simpson was reported in serious condition on the 14th. By January 17th, he was listed in critical condition. Marshal Simpson died at 6 a.m. on January 17, 1939.

Marshal Simpson was survived by seven daughters, Marie Simpson, Margaret Miles, Mildred (Eldon) Green, Fern Simpson, Virginia Simpson, Doris Simpson, and Verna Simpson; at least three grandchildren, Helen Miles, Jean Miles, and Robert Miles; and siblings, John Simpson, Jemima Simpson, and Benjamin Simpson.

Funeral services were conducted at his home at 250 Augspurger Avenue at 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 19, 1939. He was buried in Greenwood Cemetery.

INVESTIGATION

The Ohio Highway Patrol and Sheriff Charles B. Walke launched a manhunt.

Three youths who were caught in a similar burglary were being questioned upon his death. Two submitted to polygraph exams by Cincinnati Police Detectives and were discounted.

On the 17th, Hamilton Police picked up Frazee, Helton, and York on suspicion. New Miami Mayor Herbert Davis had been informed that Frazee had been unnaturally interested in the robbery at the Arthur Spradling cafe. York and Helton were known to be companions of Frazee.

After daily interrogations, Helton's father, Henry Helton, asked if he could speak with his boy. Helton then confessed to his father in the office of Paul Baden, Butler County Prosecutor. He admitted to having been a lookout. Then York confessed. Then Frazee. Frazee then asked, "Why not tell about Meyers? Why he got a bullet in his wrist right now from the fight?" Frazee confessed to having been the triggerman.

The weapon was recovered on Eaton Road where they hurled it after the shooting. It was the Luger they stole the summer before.

Meyers was arrested at his home and also confessed.

On April 8, 1939, Henry Helton filed a claim for the posted \$300 reward offered by the New Miami Council and Hamilton Coke and Iron company. On April 21, 1939, \$100 was awarded to him and the other \$200 split among other claimants.

JUSTICE

The four youths were arraigned by Mayor Davis on charges of

Murder on Friday evening, January 20, 1939. All entered formal pleas of not guilty and were bound over to the grand jury. Prosecutor Paul Baden announced that a grand jury would probably be recalled within the week.

On January 21, 1939 the four refused to testify at the Coroner's Inquest by Butler County Coroner Harry Deubel. Seven witnesses did testify; Frank Clements, county investigator, Marshal Andrew Cain, Arthur Spradling, Deputy Sheriff Mark Duer, Deputy Marshal Henry Collins, Hamilton Detective Robert Leonard, and Miss Anne Stevens.

The case went to the Grand Jury on January 30, 1939. On February 1, 1939, the grand jury returned indictments on all but Helton, the juvenile.

York pleaded guilty to 2nd Degree Murder. On March 22, 1939 he was sentenced to Life Imprisonment. On May 10, 1947, he escaped from the London Prison Farm. He had plans to head to New Orleans then South America when he was arrested at 111 W. 3rd Street in Cincinnati by Cincinnati Police Detectives Harry Batter, George Rees, Lawrence Gagliano, and William Donovan. York was paroled during 1955, at 33, having spent sixteen years in prison. He was given a job at a papermill in Hamilton. At some point he married Edith Sturgill and they had a child together. He died June 21, 1992 at 72 years of age and is buried in Hickory Flat Cemetery in Overbeck, Butler County.

Meyers pleaded innocent before Judge P. P. Boli. He was scheduled to plead to 2nd Degree Murder but changed his plea. We do not know how Meyers was convicted, if by plea or trial, but before April 9, 1939, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Meyers was paroled during 1954, at 32, having served fifteen years. We do not know where he went from there.

Fraze, the triggerman, was due to go on trial on March 23, 1939 before a three-judge court but pleaded guilty to 1st Degree Murder. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on March 26, 1939. About February 28, 1960, Ohio Governor Michael V. DiSalle reduced his charge to 2nd Degree Murder, thereby making him eligible for parole. Fraze was paroled after 21 years on April 21, 1960 at the age of forty. Within two months, he was charged with speeding in Columbus. We know nothing of his whereabouts or activities thereafter.

On March 25, Albert Helton was sentenced to the Lancaster Reform School by Juvenile Judge Gideon Palmer and to remain until his 21st birthday and he served the full five years. It appears that his family by then had moved to near Detroit and he moved to the same area, married there, and died at the age of 50.

If you know of any information, artifacts, archives, or images regarding this officer or incident, please contact the Greater Cincinnati Police Museum at Memorial@Police-Museum.org.

This narrative was researched and revised December 29, 2019 by Cincinnati Police Lieutenant Stephen R. Kramer, Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society Vice President. All rights are reserved to him and the Greater Cincinnati Police Historical Society.